



FREESTANDING SIGNS

GENERAL INFORMATION

When are sign permits required?

Sign permits are required for all signs. A “sign” is any text or graphic intended to announce or draw attention to a business or other operation. Signs inside buildings need permits when they are located so as to be conspicuously visible and readable, without intentional and deliberate effort, from outside the building.

Changes to existing signs:

Sign permits are required for changes to the copy of existing signs unless the sign is designed for changeable copy, such as on a theater marquee.

Are some types of freestanding signs prohibited?

Flashing signs and portable signs (like “A-frames”) are not allowed. In some districts, exposed neon and other forms of direct (undiffused) illumination are not allowed. There is a general rule that signs must be on the site of the business they advertise.

SIGN PERMIT INFORMATION

How do I apply for a sign permit?

Apply for a sign permit for a permanent sign by completing a Permit Application and turning in 2 sets of sign plans. You may prepare the plans yourself.

What do sign permits cost?

The permit fee as of August 2009 is the total of:

	<i>Illuminated Sign (new)</i>	<i>Non-illuminated Sign (new)</i>	<i>Copy Change Only</i>
<i>Application Fee</i>	\$41.40 + Electrical Permit	\$41.40	\$41.40
<i>Inspection Fee</i>	\$96.60 per sign	\$69 per sign	\$55.20 per sign
<i>Document Recording Fee</i>	\$0.69 to \$1.38 (more for multiple-page plans)	\$0.69 to \$1.38 (more for multiple-page plans)	\$0.69 to \$1.38 (more for multiple-page plans)

Where do I apply for a sign permit?

Apply in person at the Development Services Center at 39550 Liberty Street, Fremont, California 94538 between the hours of 8 a.m. and 4 p.m., Monday through Friday. Appointments are not required but they are available on request by phoning (510) 494-4443.

How long does it take to get a sign permit?

Most sign permits can be approved while you wait.

Shopping centers and other Planned Sign Programs:

“Planned Sign Programs” govern some shopping centers and other building complexes. Planned Sign Programs may specify colors, dimensions and other details of signs. Planned Sign Programs

are required for certain types of signs usually found at gas stations and drive-through restaurants. Copy changes in existing Planned Sign Programs may be approved while you wait.

How do I know if I'm in a Planned Sign Program?

How do I apply for a new Planned Sign Program or to amend an existing one?

To find out if your property is under a Planned Sign Program, or how to apply for a Planned Sign Program or an amendment, visit the Development Services Center or call City staff at (510) 494-4455. Review of new Planned Sign Programs or Planned Sign Program amendments takes about 4 weeks. The fee is \$225.

Signs in historic districts or on historic sites:

Signs on properties in Historic Overlay Districts or on historic sites or structures need review by the Historic Architectural Review Board (HARB). HARB meets monthly and the fee for review is \$200. Please contact City staff at (510) 494-4455 for submittal requirements. Properties in or near historic Niles, Mission San Jose and Centerville are likely to be considered historic.

Signs in the historic commercial districts of Centerville, Irvington, Niles and Mission San Jose are also subject to special design guidelines.

How do I know if my property is historic or has design guidelines?

To find out if your property is in a Historic Overlay District, if the structure or site is historic, or if the property has special design standards for signs, visit the Development Services Center or call City staff at (510) 494-4455.

What is needed on sign plans?

Sign plans need to show:

- The shape of the lot, the location of all existing buildings and freestanding signs, the location of the proposed sign(s) and dimensions of the surrounding landscaped planter, the proposed signs' distance from the front property line or street right-of-way, and the length of the lot frontage(s) which the sign(s) face. If you are unsure of the location of the right-of-way line, show the distance from the sidewalk, curb and street centerline (*site plan*).
- Front and side views and dimensions of the proposed freestanding sign, the copy on the sign and its footing, as well as of any existing freestanding signs on the same property (*elevations*).
- Colors and materials of the sign and of the copy on the sign as well as the type of illumination, if any.
- Details of any proposed electrical work.
- Structural details. Structural calculations by a licensed architect or engineer may be required depending on the sign's design.



Languages other than English:

If any portion of your sign (except proper names) will be in a language other than English, or if any portion of your sign will use characters not used in English, you must provide a literal translation of those portions with your application. This allows staff to ensure that your sign conforms to applicable regulations, such as announcing only goods or services available on-site.

The City also encourages, but does not require, a translation of non-English text to appear on the sign itself. This can help facilitate response to calls for emergency services as well as help businesses appeal to a wide cross-section of customers.

DETAILED REGULATIONS FOR FREESTANDING SIGNS

One freestanding sign is allowed on every lot, except for some narrow lots in the Central Business District. More freestanding signs may be allowed on very large lots and on most corner lots.

Landscaping: Every freestanding sign must be located in a single planted, irrigated landscaped area whose border is at least 4 feet from all supporting members of the sign on all sides. The border must consist of a 6-inch or higher Portland cement concrete curb.

How to Determine the Allowable Size of a Freestanding Sign:

To determine the allowable size of a freestanding sign, you need to know (1) the zoning district of the site, (2) the length of “continuous linear street frontage of the lot upon which [the] sign is located and oriented”, and the sign’s distance from the street right-of-way line. Check at the Development Services Center or call (510) 494-4455 for the zoning of your property.

Freestanding Signs In A C-O or I-R Zoning District (Or an Equivalent P District):

<i>Height Calculation</i>	<i>Maximum Height</i>	<i>Area Calculation</i>	<i>Maximum Area</i>
10 feet , for a sign at the street right-of-way line, plus 1/2 foot (6 inches) for each foot of setback from the right-of-way	20 feet	15 square feet , for a sign at the street right-of-way line, plus 2 1/2 square feet for each foot of setback from the right-of-way	1 square foot for every 2 feet of the street frontage the sign faces, up to a maximum of 66 square feet

Freestanding Signs In Any Other Commercial Or Industrial Zoning District:

<i>Height Calculation</i>	<i>Maximum Height</i>	<i>Area Calculation</i>	<i>Maximum Area</i>
10 feet , for a sign at the street right-of-way line, plus 1/2 foot (6 inches) for each foot of setback from the right-of-way	30 feet	15 square feet , for a sign at the street right-of-way line, plus 2 1/2 square feet for each foot of setback from the right-of-way	1 square foot for every 2 feet of the street frontage the sign faces, up to a maximum of 130 square feet

If you are proposing a sign that is *larger in area* but *shorter in height* than was allowed in the table above, you may use the following alternative dimensions:

Low-Profile Planter-Type Sign:

<i>Height</i>	<i>Area Calculation</i>	<i>Maximum Area (C-O or Equivalent P-District)</i>	<i>Maximum Area (Other Zoning District)</i>
6 feet (total of 8 feet including attractive ornamental or structural features*)	24 square feet , for a sign at the street right-of-way line, plus 2 ½ square feet for each foot of setback from the right-of-way	1 square foot for every 2 feet of the street frontage the sign faces, up to a maximum of 66 square feet	1 square foot for every 2 feet of the street frontage the sign faces, up to a maximum of 100 square feet

Additional Restrictions for Freestanding Signs near Freeways:

Within 350 feet of a freeway right-of-way, the *only* freestanding sign allowed is a low-profile planter-type sign with the dimensions given in the table above.

Between 350 and 1,000 feet of a freeway right-of-way, no freestanding sign may exceed the height of the main building on the same lot or a maximum of 30 feet.

AFTER A SIGN PERMIT IS ISSUED

Do permanent signs need to be inspected?

Yes. Sign installations typically require 2 inspections. The first is to inspect the footing and any attachment and the second is the final inspection.

How are inspections arranged?

To *request* an inspection:

1. Please call our Automated Inspection Request Service at (510) 494-4485. You can make your inspection request 24 hours a day and up to one business day in advance of the requested inspection day. All requests scheduled by 6:30 a.m. will be scheduled for that business day. Requests made after 6:30 a.m. will be scheduled for the next business day.
2. If you would like to know the *time of day* your project is scheduled for inspection, please call your inspector directly on the scheduled day between the hours indicated on your Inspection Record card.
3. To *cancel* an inspection without incurring a re-inspection fee, please call your inspector or the Building Inspection office (510 494-4400) by 9:00 a.m. the day of the inspection.

How long are permits good for permanent signs?

Your sign permit will expire after 180 days if the work is not inspected. Once the work is completed and passes its final inspection the permit is valid for as long as the sign stands.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

The information above is a summary of the sign regulations contained in Fremont Municipal Code Title VIII, Chapter 2, Article 21. For further information, call City staff at (510) 494-4455, visit City offices at 39550 Liberty Street, and/or consult the Sign Regulations, available at www.fremont.gov or for consultation at City offices.